

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2411

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 189

LIMDIS

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, SA

SUBJ: FAISAL'S ADVISOR COMMENTS ON SYRO-SAUDI TALKS

REF: DAMASCUS 0167

1. AT FAISAL'S DINNER FOR ASAD JANUARY 16 HAD BRIEF TALK WITH KING'S ADVISOR KAMAL ADHAM ABOUT KING'S VISIT TO DAMASCUS. ADHAM SAID VISIT WAS GOING SMOOTHLY AND HAD REINFORCED SAUDIS' GOOD OPINION OF ASAD AND CURRENT SYRIAN LEADERSHIP.

2. ADHAM STATED THAT SYRIANS HAD EMPHASZIED THEIR WORRY TO SAUDIS ABOUT PROSPECT SARG'S ISOLATION FROM THE ONGOING PROCESS OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. "WE TRIED TO REASSURE THEM", ADHAM STATED BUT INDICATED THAT SYRIAN SUSPICIONS REMAINED DEEP ROOTED. ANSWERING MY COMMENT THAT ASAD AND SADAT SEEMED TO HAVE PRESERVED INTIMATE TIES AND MUTUAL RESPECT, ADHAM SHRUGGED AND SAID PERHAPS SO, BUT THIS WAS NOT ENOUGH. TALK OF MUTUAL RESPECT WAS CHEAP AND OFTEN SERVED SIMPLY TO PAPER OVER BASIC
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TENSIONS BETWEEN STATES; IN ORDER TO BE POLITE ONE PRAISED

THE LEADER AND DAMNED HIS ADVISORS. THIS, HE CLAIMED, WAS THE CASE TODAY BETWEEN CAIRO AND DAMASCUS. ADHAM NOTED HE AND THE OTHERS IN KING'S ENTOURAGE HAD BEEN EMBARRASSED EARLIER THAT AFTERNOON AT A BRIEFING GIVEN BY NAJI JAMIL, COMMANDER OF THE SYRIAN AIR FORCE, IN WHICH THAT OFFICER HAD SHARPLY ATTACKED EGYPT'S LACK OF SUPPORT FOR SYRIAN AIR BATTLES DURING OCTOBER WAR.

3. SYRIANS HAD REITERATED SEVERAL TIMES IN DISCUSSING UPCOMING PEACE TALKS THAT "SIMULTANEITY" OF AGREEMENTS MUST CHARACTERIZE THE NEXT STAGE OF WITHDRAWAL. ADHAM, COMMENTING THAT SADAT MUST TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ANY SERIOUS ISRAELI OFFER TO RETURN EGYPTIAN TERRITORY IN THE SINAI, MADE CLEAR HE FELT SYRIAN POSITION UNREALISTIC. PERHAPS, HE CONCLUDED, WE SHOULD ALL BE MAKING GREATER EFFORT TO DEVISE VERBAL FORMUAL ABOUT "STEPS" AND "STAGES" OF WITHDRAWAL WHICH WOULD PERMIT SYRIANS TO MAINTAIN THEY HAD HELD OUT SUCCESSFULLY FOR SIMULTANEITY WHILE IN REALITY THEY WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED GOLAN NEGOTIATIONS FOLLOWING THOSE IN SINAI.

4. IRAQ: ADHAM NOTED THAT DAMASCUS UNEASINESS ABOUT POTENTIAL CRITICISM BY IRAQI BAATH WAS ACTING AS SIGNIFICANT INHIBITION ON SYRIAN POLICY MAKERS AS THEY DISCUSSED NEXT STAGES OF ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. ADHAM SAID HE BELIEVED SARG WOULD BE REASONABLE BOTH ON THE TIMETABLE OF WITHDRAWAL AND THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE GENERALLY IF BAGHDAD HELD ITS FIRE. ADHAM NOTED THAT RIYADH ITSELF WAS STILL UNHAPPY ABOUT CONDUCT OF IRAQI LEADERS. STATED THAT IRAQI FONMIN ON RECENT VISIT TO RIYADH HAD URGED SAUDI ARABIA TO JOIN OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES IN COMMON FRONT AGAINST IRAN. SAUDIS HAD TOLD FONMIN THAT WHEN BAGHDAD STOPPED STIRRING UP TROUBLES IN ARAB WORLD AND MAKING PROVOCATIVE STATEMENTS ABOUT OTHER ARAB LEADERSHIPS, THEN REST OF ARAB WORLD MIGHT EXAMINE HOW THEY COULD ASSIST IRAQ. IRAQI FONMIN'S UNREGENERATED ANSWER HAD BEEN, "WE WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT REVOLUTION EVERYWHERE."

5. PALESTINIAN QUESTION: ADHAM STATED UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT SYRIA WOULD ACCEPT THE EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL WITHIN ITS CONFIDENTIAL

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JUNE 1967 BOUNDARIES SIDE BY SIDE WITH A WEST BANK/
GAZA PALESTINIAN STATE.
MURPHY

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